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C. REMARKS

Summary of the Claims

Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 13-21, and 23-27 are pending in the present application. Claims 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14-16, 18, 22, 24, and 25 were objected to by the Examiner, but found to be otherwise allowable. In this Response, Claims 1, 2, 10, 11, 20, and 21 have been amended, and Claims 3, 12, and 22 have been cancelled. Reconsideration of the rejected claims is respectfully requested.

Examiner Interview

Applicants note with appreciation the interview conducted between Applicants' undersigned attorney and the Examiner on May 4, 2004. During the interview, the Examiner and Applicants' attorney discussed amendment to claim 1 substantially as set forth in the amended claims included herewith. Applicants' attorney noted that the amendment should place the claims in condition for allowance as the amended independent claims include limitations not found by the Examiner during three previous searches (i.e., the subject matter of original claim 3). The Examiner agreed that the claims will be allowed so long as a subsequent search does not reveal art that teaches Applicants' amended independent claims. Should a subsequent search reveal such new art that was not uncovered during the previous three searches conducted by the Examiner, then the Examiner agreed that another non-final office action would be warranted to allow Applicants the opportunity to review, and possibly traverse, such new art in a non-final setting.

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Non-Responsive Amendment

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's response dated September 8, 2004 indicting that Applicants responded to a § 102 rejection when the latest non-final Office Action does not have any § 102 rejections and, instead, rejects claims under § 103. Applicants have addressed this error in this Response. Applicants response dated May 12, 2004 was a bona fide response as evidenced by the fact that in the Response Applicants amended claims in light of the Examiner Interview that was conducted on May 4, 2004. Unfortunately, sections of Applicants Remarks were inadvertently replaced with Remarks found in one of Applicants' previous Responses. Applicants sincerely apologize for this error and any inconvenience it may have caused the Examiner.

Because the Office Action dated September 8, 2004 does not indicate whether Applicants' amendments have been entered, the same amendments have been included in this Response.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14-16, 18, 22, 24, and 25 are objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Applicants have amended each of the independent claims to include limitations that were found to be allowable. In particular, claim 1 was amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 3, independent claim 10 was amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 12, and claim 20 was amended to include the limitations of allowable claim 22. As their limitations are now

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part of their respective independent claims, claims 3, 12, and 22 have been cancelled.

Each of the independent claims is now allowable because each includes limitations found to be allowable in the Office Action dated January 9, 2004. Claims 2, and 4-9 each depend on allowable claim 1 and, therefore, are allowable for at least this reason. Claims 11, and 13-19 each depend on allowable claim 10 and, therefore, are allowable for at least this reason. Finally, claims 21, and 23-27 each depend on allowable claim 20 and, therefore, are allowable for at least this reason.

35 U.S.C. § 103, Alleged Obviousness

Claims 1, 4, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19, 20, 23, 26, and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as allegedly being obvious and therefore unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,463,625 to Yasrebi (hereinafter "Yasrebi") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,396,828 to Liu (hereinafter "Liu").

While Applicants do not agree that Applicants' claims originally filed claims are obvious and therefore unpatentable over Yasrebi in view of Liu, Applicants have amended the independent claims including limitations that were found to be allowable, as described in the preceding section. Therefore the rejections of claims 1, 4, 7, 9, 13, 17, 19, 20, 23, 26, and 27 is now moot.

Conclusion

As a result of the foregoing, it is asserted by Applicants that all pending claims in the Application are in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request allowance of such claims.

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Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner contact the Applicants' attorney listed below if the Examiner believes that such a discussion would be helpful in resolving any remaining questions or issues related to this Application.

Respectfully submitted,

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